

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 169413

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 169413

FOLLOWING REPEAT USUN 03298 ACTION SECSTATE INFO GENEVA 11 JUL 75

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 3298

PASS TO AID, EA/VN
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EAID, VS, VN, UNICEF
SUBJECT: UN HUMANITARIAN AID TO VIETNAM AND OTHER MATTERS

REF: 1) USUN 3226; 2) STATE 158198; 3) USUN 1904

1. SUMMARY: THIS MSG RECOUNTS VONVERSATION MISOFF HAD WITH FRANCIS SMITHWICK (AUSTRALIAN) OF UNICEF WHO HAS LAST UN OFFICIAL TO LEAVE SAIGON. REMARKS MADE BY SMITHWICK, IN ADDITION OT OVERVIEW, INCLUDED COMMENTS ON: RESIDUAL UN OPERATIONS, VIETNAM RED CROSS, STATUS OF REFUGEE CAMPS, AMERICANS IN SAIGON, POSITION OF JAPANESE, WELFARE OF POPULATION, FOREIGN AID, RELATIONS OF SAIGON GOVER MENT TO UNICEF. SMITHWISK, WHO HAD ASSUMED DUTIES AS HEAD OF UNICEF OFFICE IN SAIGON ON UPRIL 12, AND AFTER EVACUATION OF MOST OF UNDP STAFF BECAME ACTING RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE, WAS EVACUATED
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 169413

ON JUNE 5. COMMENTS THEREFORE SHOULD BE VIEWED AS PERTAINING ONLY TO THIS PERIOD. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING ARE POINTS MADE BY SMITHWICK. SMITHWICK

IS OLD UNICEF HAND WITH CONSIDERABLE OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE. PRIOR TO HIS SAIGON ASSIGNMENT HE WAS COORDINATOR OF UNICEF EMERGENCY PROGRAMS, A POSITION HE RESUMED AGAIN AFTER HIS EVACUATION. AFTER COLLAPSE OF SAIGON GOVERNMENT HE HAD FREE ACCESS TO ALL PARTS OF SAIGON EXCEPT AIRPORT AND PORT AREA AND EVIDENTLY WAS IN CONTACT WITH REMAINING EMBASSIES, (FRENCH, JAPANESE, BELGIANS, PNDIANS, SWISS) ALTHOUGH NOT WITH ANY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS, WHO WAS HIS LANDLORD. MUCH OF FOLLOWING INFO MAY ALREADY BE KNOWN TO DEPARTMENT BUT SINCE WE DONT KNOW WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT KNOWN WE RECOUNTING ALL COMMENTS MADE BY SMITHWICK.

3. REFUGEE CAMPS. ACCORDING TO SMITHWICK HE WAS INFORMED BY LICROSS OFFICIALS ABOUT MID-MAY THAT ALL BUT TWO PERCENT OF THE ESTIMATED 200,000 REFUGEES IN THE SAIGON UND DELTA AREAS HAD GONE BACK TO THEIR HOMES. PRESUMABLY THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE OF THE NVN MILITARY (WHO VIEWED THE REFUGEES AS HAVING BEEN PUT IN "CONCENTRATION CAMPS" BY THE OLD PUPPET REGIME) AND BY FACT THAT THE AUTHORITIES PROVIDED REFUGEES WITH ENOUGH FOOD TO LAST THE JOURNEY AND IN SOME CASES WITH BUS TICKETS. THE TWO PERCENT FIGURE ACCORDING TO SMITHWICK ALSO APPLIES TO REFUGEES ON PHU QUOC ISLAND. WHEN ASKED WHERE RELIEF SUPPLIES SUPPLIED BY SIR ROBERT JACKSONS' OFFICE WERE GOING SMITHWICK REPLIED THAT THEY MUST HAVE GONE TO THE NORTHERN AREAS: THESE SUPPLIES WERE NOT NEEDED FOR REFUGEES IN SAIGON OR THE DELTA. (COMMENT. THPS ASSESSMENT WOULD TIE IN WITH CONFIRMATION REPORTED REF (1) THAT SAIGON VIEWS EMERGENCY AS OVER. PUZZLING THING IS THAT SIR ROBERT JACKSON'S OFFICE IN CONVERSATIONS WITH MISOFF NEVER INDICATED THAT SO MANY REFUGEES HAD RETURNED HOME, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT IS MISOFF'S UNDERSTANDING THAT LOCAL IRC REPRESENTS IN ON SIR ROBERT'S STAFF MEETINGS. PERHAPS CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 169413

DEPT MAY WISH TO HAVE GENEVA MAKE APPROPRIATE INQUIRIES AT LICROSS HEADQUARTERS. END COMMENT).

4. FOREIGN AID. WHEN ASKED IF ANY DONOR HAD BEEN PROVIDING AID SMITHWICK STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMS THAT UP UNTIL JUNE 5 ONLY 6 VESSELS HAD CALLED AT THE PORT OF SAIGON; 2 CHINESE, 2 SOVIET, 2 NORTH VIETNAMESE. ONE SHIP CARRIED WHEAT FLOUR, ONE GASOLINE; OTHER CARGOES WERE UNKNOWN. SMITHWICK WAS NOT CERTAIN WHETHER CARGOES CONSTITUTED AID OR WERE COMMERICAL TRANSACTIONS.

5. AMERICANS IN SAIGON. SMITHWICK VOLUNTEERED THAT

PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE HE HAD TRIED TO FIND AMERICANS. HE FOUND FOUR: A "BEATNIK" WHO WAS PENNILESS, A NUN, A CHINESE-AMERICAN AND A MISSIONARY DOCTOR WHO HAD COME FROM DANANG AND WHO WAS TRYING TO GET TO PHU QUOC ISLAND. SMITHWICK COULD NOT RECALL THEIR NAMES, WHICH HE HAD WRITTEN IN HIS DIARY, SUBSEQUENTLY LOST.

6. RESIDUAL UN OPERATIONS. AFTER INITIAL EVACUATION JUST PRIOR TO COLLAPSE OF SAIGON GOVERNMENT THERE WERE 7 UN OFFICIALS IN SAIGON. THREE FROM UNICEF, TWO FROM UNDP AND TWO FROM WHO. WHEN SMITHWICK WAS EVACUATED ON JUNE 5 HE TOOK OTHER TWO UNICEF OFFICIALS WITH HIM LEAVING THE FOUR OTHER UN PERSONNEL. THESE FOUR ACCORDING TO SMITHWICK ARE STILL THERE. OF THE TWO UNDP OFFICIALS, ONE IS ILO REP, ONE A STAFF MEMBER (SMITHWICK CALLED HIM A COORDINATOR). NEITHER UNDP OFFICIAL WANTED TO LEAVE WHEN UNDP WAS EVACUATED.

7. WELFARE OF POPULATION. ACCORDING TO SMITHWICK THERE WAS AMPLE FOOD IN THE MARKETS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MILK. THERE WAS SO FAR AS HE KNEW NO BRUTALITY OR MOLESTATION OF ANY SORT ON PART OF OCCUPYING TROOPS. LOOTING WAS DONE BY THE SOUTHERNERS, PERHAPS SOME VIETCONG, NOT THE NVN MILITARY. BLACK MARKET IN U.S. DOLLARS WAS SLOURSHING, WITH U.S. DOLLARS REQUIRED TO PAY AIRPORT TAX UPON DEPARTURE (ONE U.S. DOLLAR) AND TO PURCHASE AIR TICKETS (SMITHWICK LEFT ON RUSSIAN CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 169413

BUILT PLANE, PILOTED BY ARMED NORTH VIETNAMESE, WITH AIR VIETNAM STEWARDESSES, AT PRIIE OF U.S. \$120 WITH VIENTIANE AS DESTINATION). PX-TYPE GOODS WERE IN PLENTIFUL SUPPLY ON THE MARKET. CIVIL SERVANTS WERE BACK AT WORK. SO FAR AS SMITHWICK KNEW ONLY PERSON IN JAIL OF ANY CONSEQUENCE WAS DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK, HE BEING PERSON WHO PERMITTED THIEU TO LEAVE WITH GOLD BULLION. MAJOR PROBLEM WAS LACK OF MONEY, SINCE BANKS WERE NOT OPEN. ANOTHER PROBLEM WAS SHORT-AGE OF GASOLINE. ANOTHER WAS THIEPERY, ALLEGEDLY THE WORK FOR THE MOST PART OF "TOUGHS" (MANY OF WHOM PRESUMABLY FILIPINOS) ALL OF WHOM WERE RELEASED FROM THE JAILS.

8. OTHER FOREIGNERS. SMITHWICK'S ESTIMATE OF NON-DIPLOMATIC FOREIGNERS IN SAIGON AREA WAS 6,800 FILIPINOS, SOUTH KOREAS AND TAIWANESE WHO REGISTERED WITH RED CROSS; 8,000 FRENCH; 100,000 CAMBODIANS, TAIWANESE AND CHINESE FROM SINGAPORE WHO DID NOT REGISTER WITH RED CROSS. HE RESERRED TO THESE FIGURES AS "COMING FROM HIS INTELLIGENCE SOURCES."

9. RELATION OF SAIGON GOVERNMENT TO UNICEF. CONTRARY TO USUN REPORT NOTED REF (3) THAT UNICEF WAS ASKED BY SAIGON AUTHORITIES TO CLOSE UNICEF OFFICE, ACCORDING TO SMITHWICK THIS NOT EXACTLY ACCURATE. HE STATED THAT BECAUSE SAIGON AUTHORITIES WERE BENT ON BY-PASSING SAIGON UNICEF OFFICE TO TALK TO UNICEF OFFICIALS IN HANOI THAT HIS OPERATION WAS NO LONGER NECESSARY, AND HENCE HE OPTED TO CLOSE DOWN SHOP. WITH REGARD OPENING OF FULL-FLEDGED UNICEF OFFICE IN SAIGON, AS REPORTED REF (1) THIS ACCURATE; ALTHOUGH REMY, WHO IS TO BE DIRECTOR OF OFFICE, IS FRENCH CITIZEN, NOT SWISS AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

10. SOUTH VIETNAMESE RED CROSS. PRIOR TO FALL OF SAIGON GOVERNMENT SMITHWICK MADE ARRANGMENTS FOR UNICEF RELIEF SUPPLIES TO BE CHanneLED THROUGH SOUTH VIETNAMESE RED CROSS. IN HIS ESTIMATION THIS RED CROSS ORGANIZATION ONE OF THE BEST HE EVER WORKED WITH: EFFICIENT, DEDICATED, HONEST. (COMMENT. THIS COMMENT CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 169413

INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT BECAUSE IT IS CONTRARY TO OTHER ASSESSMENTS WE HAVE HEARD FROM TIME TO TIME OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE RED CROSS).

11. POSITION OF JAPANESE. SMITHWICK VOLUNTEERED THAT IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THE JAPANESE EMBASSY WAS TREATED MORE FAVORABLY THAN OTHER REMAINING EMBASSIES AFTER THE OCCUPATION OF SAIGON BY NVN TROOPS. HE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT ONLY THE JAPANESE AND THE FRENCH WERE INVITED TO ATTEND THE VICTORY PARADE; ALSO THAT WHILE THE AUTHORITIES DID NOT PERMIT RADIOS TO BE USED, THIS EVIDENTLY WAS WINKED AT IN THE CASE OF THE JAPANESE. WENT ON TO SAY THAT HIS JAPANESE FRIENDS INDICATED THAT EMBASSY WAS ALMOST TREATED LIKE AN EMBASSY. BENNETT

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